177 Syria has not been merely a passive receptacle for influences
186 coming in from outside. Whether or not the hypothesis of an
194 indigenous population and culture be accepted, it is certain that the geographical structure of the country, and the nature of its inhabitants as modified by that structure, have determined the forms which the incoming streams of influence have taken. For example, the sharp geographical divisions of Syria have helped to perpetuate the differences between various elements in the population, which have come into the country from different directions or from the same direction at different times: racial and tribal divisions have given rise to an intense localism of feeling, which has linked itself in various ways with the prejudices, the hostilities and the exclusiveness generated by the great political and religious conflicts of the past. Localism and particularism have deeply affected the political life of the country. Sometimes, when Syria has formed part of a larger political unit with a strong Government, they have been held in check ; but when the unit has disintegrated, or the Government has grown weak, the country has been partitioned between a number of petty and ephemeral local dynasties, more often than not at variance with one another.

Local and communal feeling is closely linked with the persistence of tradition. Throughout almost the whole of history the Syrians have been subjected to a succession of foreign conquerors. They have been forced at least partially to accept the customs and cultures of their rulers, and in the process they have acquired two arts : the art of rapid and superficial assimilation, and that of preserving, beneath new modes of behaviour and in new forms, their old beliefs and ways of living. 'Bow down to every nation which passes over you, but remember me in your hearts', said one of the founders of the Druze sect. It is a lesson which not only the Druzes have learned.

177 But the role of the Syrian population has not merely been one of assimilating, or resisting, outside influences. It has transformed these influences and spread them to the surrounding world, and it has made its own and original contributions to civilization. From the time of the Phœnicians, Syrian merchants have been scattered throughout western Asia and the Mediterranean world. Syrian officials helped to administer the Roman, the Arab and the Ottoman Empires.

the tribe or collection of clans, held together by blood-relationship and regulated by customary law dispensed by chieftains who owed their position to a combination of birth and ability. 538

Arab life and society were reflected in the literature of the Arabic tongue: a literature which at least in its early phases grew up in isolation, developing its own norms and methods. 181 Later it was influenced by other literatures, but throughout its history it preserved a continuity of outlook and subject-matter and perfectly expressed the dreams, the convictions and the limitations of the people which produced it.

7

The Arabian influences were brought into Syria by the successive waves of Beduin immigrants from Arabia; a few generations after the Islamic conquest they had permeated virtually the whole population, whether or not they were Arabian by origin. The popular morality, the folk-lore and the language of the people became Arabic, and the literate took pride in Arabic poetry and prose. Tribalism and loyalty to the clan or patriarchal family continued to be the bases of society even in conditions very different from those which had generated them. The depth of Arabization varies however from one part of the country to another. In certain sections of the coastal mountain-ranges Arab ways took longer to penetrate and perhaps went less deep than in the plains of the interior.

The only important elements in the population which were not Arabized were the Kurdish and Turcoman tribes which at a later period had established themselves in the northern portions of the country, and some of which from being nomads had become semi-sedentary or sedentary. They however were not wholly isolated from the majority, since they were orthodox Moslems and possessed a tribal organization similar to that of the Arabs. There were also Armenians, Turks and Europeans in the larger towns.

8

The Arab tradition was modified by the new economic conditions which the tribes found when they reached the Fertile Crescent. Those tribes which remained on the edge of the Crescent continued their pastoral life; but those which

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threatened by the avarice of his superiors, the encroachment of his equals and the insubordination of his vassals. The size of domains and the fortunes of noble families were always changing. A certain stability was, however, given to the system by the practice of turning lands into religious trusts (Waqfs) for religious or charitable objects. Families which were the custodians of such trusts, which benefited from them in other ways, or which by tradition filled important religious positions, had a better chance of retaining their wealth and influence than those which had become rich and powerful through tax-farming.

At the bottom of the feudal structure were the cultivators, who were serfs of their immediate lords, owing them a variety of feudal dues and oppressed by them. The usual practice was for a village to hold and cultivate its land in common; small individual holdings were the exception.

9

Sometimes the local dynasts were adventurers, ruling by the sword alone and without any support from local tradition. But often their rule was firmly based upon local sentiment and loyalty: a localism which was reinforced by tribalism and, in those districts in which compact religious minorities were settled, by sectarianism. This was especially so in Lebanon; but over the whole country it is true to say that the local community was the real political and social unit. There was no effective consciousness of an Arab nation, and 'Syria' was no more than a geographical expression; nor was there any sense of responsibility for the Government, which was generally regarded as essentially hostile, an instrument of oppression.

Side by side with the life of the countryside, there went on the distinctive life of the Syrian towns. The immemorial stopping-places on the trade-routes—the ports, the bazaar-towns and the caravan-towns—kept something of their greatness in the Ottoman period. There was still a lively transit-trade; Syrian wheat and fruit still went to Egypt, cottons and silks to Europe. The town-populations were Arabic in language, and their ways were deeply influenced by Arab customs; but their social structure differed from that of the countryside, and was determined by their peculiar economic function. They were naturally more open to influences

369 from outside than were the villages. The foreign merchants
621 and artisans in the coastal towns and Aleppo, the pilgrims
184 who every year met in Damascus for their long journey down the pilgrims' road to the Holy Cities in Arabia, left their mark. Thus beside the society of the desert and the countryside there flourished an urban society of merchants and craftsmen. Not only was the life of the great towns very different from that of the countryside; they differed one from another. Each had a life of its own and was the focus of an intense local loyalty.

10

101 The Arabo-Islamic community of Syria was a part, although in some ways a distinctive part, of two larger units: the Arabic-speaking world which extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the frontiers of Persia, and included Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli, Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula; and the Islamic world, stretching as far as the marches of China and embracing, in addition to the Arabic countries, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Turkestan and large parts of Africa, India, China and the East Indies. In spite of local differences, of internal conflicts and of the difficulties of communication, each of these worlds was unified on a profound level.

175 Over a large part of the Arab and Islamic worlds, the
101 spiritual and social unity which they possessed was reinforced by the political unity derived from common membership of
177 the Ottoman Empire. The positive virtue of Ottoman rule was that it provided this political unity; its negative that it did not interfere with the life and customary law of the subject-peoples. Nomads by origin, the Ottoman Turks cared little for the arts of peace, for commerce and industry, or for culture. They left them to others, and thus contributed nothing essential to the civilization of the Arab provinces which they ruled for four hundred years. In conquering the Arab world they had themselves been conquered by it. They had become Moslems, and in their intellectual and social life had adapted themselves to Arab ways.

175 The Turks performed also another function. Their military
177 strength preserved the Arab civilization from interference or even from living contact with other civilizations. In the early Islamic centuries such contacts had existed, and the Arabo-

563 L9 formation of a Kurdish State which should unite the different parts of the Kurdish nation, now divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. In general, however, the Kurds are still too hostile to government as such for nationalism to have made much headway among them.

The different sections of the separatists do not seem to agree upon anything except their opposition to Syrian rule; for the population of the Jazirah possesses no such cohesion as the Druzes and Alawis. They are a collection of refugees, with something of the refugee mentality.

12

162 795 In the rest of Syria—that is to say, in the six provinces of Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, the Hauran and the Euphrates—there were at the end of 1938, according to official statistics, 352,000 members of religious minorities out of a total population of about 1,941,000, excluding the nomads. Approximately 250,000 were Christians, 91,000 heterodox Moslems and 24,000 Jews. Thus almost 20 per cent of the total population belonged to religious minorities, and of those 20 per cent roughly two-thirds were Christians. Most of the Christians are Arabic-speaking, with the exception of the Armenians. There must also be taken into account the several thousand Circassians, Turcomans and Kurds who are Sunni Moslems and therefore not members of religious minorities, but who constitute racial and linguistic minorities.

The members of religious minorities are most numerous in the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo, in each of which they number over 100,000, out of a total population of 530,000 in the former and 750,000 in the latter; but it is in the provinces of Homs and Hama that they form the largest proportion of the population (about 35 per cent). In the other two provinces—those of the Hauran and the Euphrates—there are comparatively few of them.

13

184 The differences between the Arabic-speaking Christians and the Moslems may be exaggerated. They share a language, many social customs and traditions; they are in some sense a single people. But while this is true and important, it must also be remembered that they differ from one another not only in religion but also in certain of their intellectual, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS.

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social and economic characteristics. For example, the Christians accounted in 1938 for about 32 per cent of the total school population, and for an even larger proportion of pupils in the secondary schools. It is important to notice that 32 per cent of the Christian students attended schools controlled mainly by foreign Christian missions, 61 per cent attended private schools mostly maintained by religious communities, and only 7 per cent attended official schools.[1] Since the education given in the first two types of school is sectarian, Christians are receiving a different kind of education from Moslems, a far larger proportion of whom attend official institutions.

Educational differences are reinforced by social ones. The Christians still form a social unit, or rather a series of interconnected units, of which the relations with the Moslem community are peaceful and correct but not in normal circumstances cordial. This is especially true of the older people brought up under the Ottoman régime. The introduction of freer social customs from the West, the spread of education and the growth of the idea of nationalism are helping to make the young less conscious than their elders of their confessional loyalties, and may in the end succeed in breaking down the barriers between the sects and religions. Economically, also, the Christians tend to constitute a more predominantly urban community than the Moslems, with all the differences which that involves, but there is a Christian peasantry in certain parts of the country, similar in many ways to the Moslem peasantry.

In spite of incidents like those of 1860, on the whole the history of Syria has not been one of religious persecution on a large scale, and the Christians have enjoyed long periods of toleration, although not of equality with the Moslems. Such toleration has existed partly because of the long residence of Christians in the country, partly because they were not numerous enough to constitute a serious threat to Moslem supremacy, and partly because clergy and laity alike were for the most part Arabic in language and culture.

On the whole the growth of the nationalist movement has not had unfavourable consequences for the Christians. Individual Christians have played an important part in the movement in Syria as elsewhere. Nor is it merely isolated

[1] Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport*, 1938, p. 91.

44:Matthews and Akrawi S,G-3 (1945-1948)1949 MI Middle East
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make it difficult for the teachers to finish the course and for the students to digest the subjects. To this criticism it is answered that some subjects—philosophy, for example—have been abolished and others reduced. The second foreign language has been abolished for the last three years of the intermediate school and now only begins in the fifth year. It is claimed that formerly a disproportionate amount of time was taken by the examinations at the beginning and the end of the year. Much less time is now taken by the examinations so that somewhere between a half and a full academic year is saved and is available for teaching purposes.

Admission and educational opportunity

Admission to the secondary school was formerly open to holders of the primary-school certificate provided they had passed their examination with a grade of *bien* (good) or *assez bien* (fairly good). In this way admission to the secondary school was limited. Under the reorganization these limitations have been abolished, and the way is open to all who wish to enter, provided they can pay the fees. The fees are not exorbitant, being £S48 ($21.60) in the intermediate, and £S60 ($27.27) in the preparatory schools. Even here, however, there is a wide range of exemptions. Children of teachers or of government employees receiving less than £S50 a month are exempt. Students are also exempt if their marks are high enough in the public examinations. A reduction of 30 percent of the fees is made to children of officials having a monthly salary of £S50–£S100. By order of the Ministry of Education no fees were charged in the two secondary schools of the Jabal Druze. In practice, about one-third of the student body receives exemptions. In addition, brothers pay less. One additional brother pays two-thirds of the fees, two additional brothers pay one-half each, and three additional brothers pay one-fourth each.

Students coming from localities where there is no secondary school, or the local school is incomplete, go usually to Damascus or Aleppo where boarding departments are maintained in both the boys and the girls secondary schools. Here, again, help is given to the deserving poor student through provision for free board or free lunches. In Aleppo, out of 247 boarding students in the public secondary school for boys, 92 received free board; and out of 140 students who ate only lunch at school, 58 received it free. The proportions were even higher in the Aleppo public secondary school for girls, where 24 boarders received their board free as compared with 29 girls who paid. Twenty-two had free lunch as compared with 10 who paid.

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It is clear that an effort is being made to help the underprivileged child

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to pursue his education further, and to equalize educational opportunity. How far these efforts are effective in the rural communities is another matter. Inquiry at some of the village schools showed that very few pupils from them had gone on to secondary schools.

Teachers, Classes, and School Activities

There were 255 secondary-school teachers in the Syrian public schools in 1943–44. The following is a tabulation of their qualifications.[6]

Qualifications	Number of Teachers
Doctorates (of which 7 were in medicine)	17
Licence ès Lettres or *ès Sciences* from France	35
Licence in Letters from Fuad I University, Cairo	5
Master of Arts from the American University of Beirut, or from America	14
Licence in Law	17
Higher School of Letters	11
Teachers College at Istanbul	2
Total	101

The remainder (154 persons) have varied qualifications. It will be noticed that while many teachers of the secondary cadre hold higher degrees, few of them are professionally trained. Many teachers have formerly been in primary schools and were promoted to teach in secondary classes.

The same phenomenon of the decrease in the number of students as they rise in their grades which was noticed in the primary school is noticeable in secondary and vocational schools, as is shown by the figures for 1944–45 (Table 64) which were supplied by the Ministry of Education:

TABLE 64

Distribution of Pupils in Classes in Secondary and Vocational Schools, Syria, 1944–45 *

Class	Boys	Girls	Total
Preparatory class (vocational)	340	93	433
First year	1,863	604	2,467
Second year	1,103	393	1,496
Third year	742	291	1,033
Fourth year	446	193	639
Fifth year	356	52	408
Sixth year	234	47	281
Philosophy and mathematics	285	16	301
Total	5,369	1,689	7,058

[6] Al-Husni, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-34.